

FIRE MUSEUM WATCHDESK

Annual Review 2014



Collecting · Preserving · Educating · Interpreting

The Fire Alarm Office was given a total makeover in 2014. This was one of our major accomplishments this year. Dismantling of the alarm apparatus and demolition of the old office began on December 30, 2013. Construction of the new office was dedicated on April 26, 2014.

A walk through the new alarm offices takes you through four periods of fire alarm technology:

1870—1890 Introduced fire alarms, greatly improving response time. This was a period of experimentation in every city.

1900—1930 Communications and signalling apparatus were sophisticated and stable.

1940—1960 Radio added its voice resulting in a need for a different kind of recording equipment.

1970-2000 Brought the advent of the digital age and with it sophisticated electronics that enables rapid and more flexible response to many different emergency situations. *We are seeking reel-to-reel and disc mechanisms. Contact the curator if you can help.*



THE FIRE ALARM OFFICE



Here are three images of the office as it completed its 1971-2013 period. In September of '71, it consisted of a tapper and register sitting on an old table in the corner. Founding Sup't. Les Keller and Joe Rock spent three years getting the City's 3-dial transmitter (seen in photo, next page, top) to work, and pulling 7,000 feet of wire through the overhead. From '72 to '85 there was a desk and stand suitable for the registers and misc. equipment. The circuit board was made from brass parts that Les had saved from the 1922 Baltimore system.



John LaCosta, Sup't of Fire Alarm since 1982 standing in the old office in December 2013. The status or 'running board' was required to keep track of every Company in the City.

More volunteers are needed to learn the system and continue building exhibits.





This Garl Box 212 was a gift of Mrs Patricia Bowling along with a splendid assortment of other boxes and some central office equipment.



New Year's Day 2014: Make Space!

Truth be known, planning started in 2003. This project consumed over \$57,000 which had to be raised separately from the annual income. Then in order to have fresh exhibits ready to be placed in the new exhibit, restoring and refurbishing began in 2012. The old exhibit had to be dismantled and hundreds of artifacts carefully logged and stored: this started Christmas week 2013 after we closed for the season. First came the little pieces, gradually building up in size. Objects were sorted into corresponding spaces for their newly intended relationships. Bigger materials, weighing hundreds of pounds, were moved by fork lift and rollers, and secured so that incoming contractors

would not be hindered. Much of this was done on New Year's Day by a hearty crew who gave up their holiday for the greater good!

Glen Arm Building Co. was the general contractor that did a great job. A wall was knocked out; ceiling demolished; doors changed, and so much more. Meanwhile two of the biggest machines had to be moved around in the room to stay clear of work.

Artifacts that had been collected and stored elsewhere were brought out.





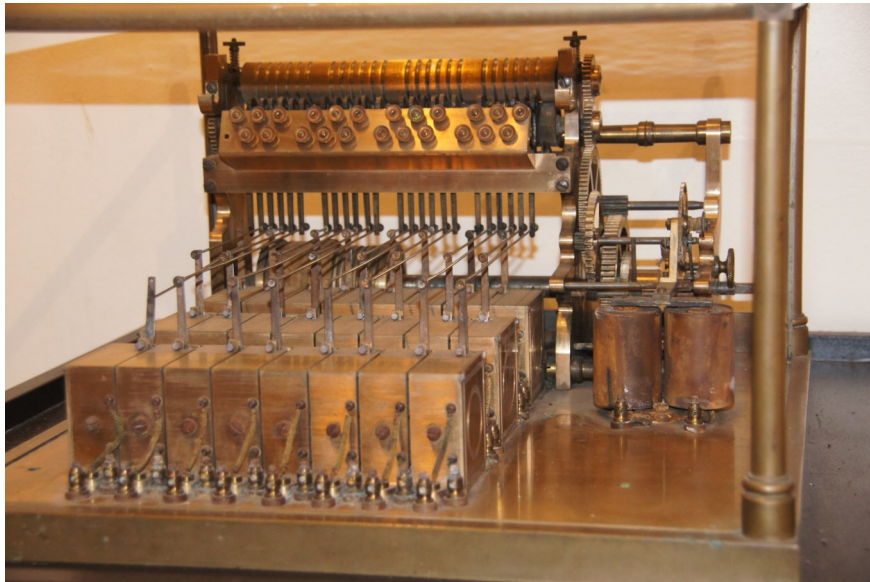
See if you can find the indicator on your next visit. It was built after 1883 with a walnut case, making it one of the earliest known indicators.



John Palese is cleaning the Gamewell indicator and installing some replica parts made for Tom Laun. Bill McCartin is seen lettering Box 213 on the previous page. Many machines went through their hands for cleaning. Some required that early paint and brass finishing details be copied.

BELOW: Earp and Lenny from Beta Systems, put our Gamewell 'Form 4' console in service. It is a gift from Bethlehem Steel Corp. This was state-of-the-art in about 1940 and was very popular with military installations and factories.



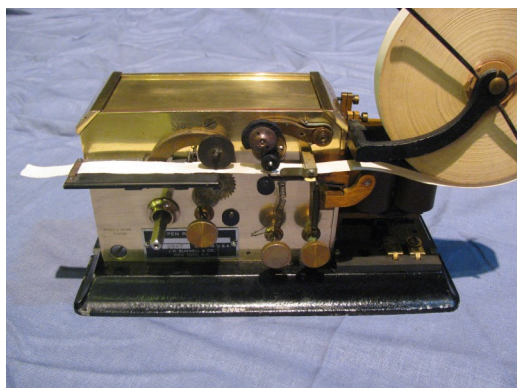


c.1873 Moses Crane 23 circuit inking register such as every major city had until replaced by either the 2 circuit unit shown in the lower left corner, or the punching registers invented about 1898. All machines were driven by weights at first and later by springs.



ABOVE: new outside wall showing gongs and status boards. Donors of these artifacts include Curt Elie, William Willock, John J. O'Malley, John LaCosta, Amtrak and Baltimore City

BELOW RIGHT: 1889 Gamewell box before lettering last winter and with its new bracket made by Rut Colt to hold the c.1895 enameled sign.



Touring the Alarm Office Today

Your tour of the Alarm Office begins in 1859 with the earliest fire alarm signalling apparatus. Baltimore's very first transmitter (white marble case, top photo) was installed by a young Gamewell company and we can deduct from some scant local records that there were two outgoing alarm circuits. This artifact is on loan by the Box 414 Association. Technology in those days was crude but there was an emphasis on reliability which also meant redundancy.

Bells, whether in towers or on walls, were critical as were recording registers at the central office. The concept of having registers in the fire houses came along fifteen years later. By the 1880s fire signalling had matured, just as did the fire fighting apparatus.

Simplification in design and appearance was the watchword in the 1930s but no major operational changes took place until the 1960s when digitization and verbal recordation became the standard.



1870

**1940 and
1980**



1900



RIGHT: the boxes on the far wall show an amazing variety of technology. Most of them, however, are made in the 'cottage' style peaked roof box. The plastic-wrapped shelf is temporary. It contains many rare registers and other telegraph equipment. An exhibit on radios is coming.



Donors to the Fire Alarm Office

James A. Marsh, \$23,000

\$5,000—7,000

FIRE, Ltd.

H. M. S. Insurance Company

Motorola Foundation

Whiting-Turner Contracting Co.

\$600—900

Alarm Tech Solutions, LLC

Beta Systems, Incorporated

Rubeling & Associates

Sunbelt Rentals, Inc.

*The Board of Directors gratefully acknowledges this
generous and dedicated group of benefactors.*

*The Museum has been able to make substantial
improvements in exhibits, lighting and building
comforts such as air conditioning through special
gifts. We thank you, one and all.*

\$1,000—3,000

Chason Service Engineers

Thomas J. Colleran

William C. Ensor, III

Stephen G. Heaver, Jr.

Shaw Hospitality Group

Up to \$500

Charles F. Brush

Cap Corporation

George T. Ehrman

Lester G. Eser

Glen Arm Building Company

John D. LaCosta

Patricia L. Lloyd

William F. McCartin

Miles Electric Company

Michael & Pamela Stephens

Tyre's Auto Service

David A. Welden



The Museum is selling a circular stair case with 15 treads (9" risers), complete. These steps are from a Baltimore fire house c.1910. Asking price is \$5,000; make an offer. Funds will be used to improve exhibits.



Our annual Steam Show is always on the first Saturday in May and we thank the many friends who bring their hand and horse drawn equipment, the steam models and the dalmatians..

We miss our good friend, Bob Dreyer, who conceived the Steam Show 37 years ago, and Walter Rice, who provided horses for every event for two decades. They both died last year and we remember them with great fondness.

It takes many hands to prepare and then clean up the brass and various tools. If you are willing to help in 2015, please give Steve a call.



Dennis Fulton and Josiah Wagener discuss the repairs required to the c.1880 Rumsey hand engine that Dennis donated last Winter. (photo to the right)



What involves a bus, slides, walking and cider? The Great Baltimore Fire Tour, of course. This is an event not to be missed. Wayne Schaumburg is our expert; the date is a Sunday early in February.



Whether it is a tour or a Birthday party, audiences young & old are captivated at the Fire Museum of Maryland! Rob handles tours and Francine works with parents to arrange parties, so please call them at extension 102 or 103 respectively.

RIGHT: Dante Alfone is giving a Fire Fighter's view of his turn out gear and why it is so important.

BELOW: The main hall is set up for a party. Catered evening parties with special lighting can also be accommodated.



Check out the Museum Store for a new illustrated history of F.D. registers as well as the many other publications, small objects, toys and party supplies.

The Towson Fourth of July Parade is a main staple of our year and we could turn out more apparatus if we had more volunteers. Bottom right: our 'flagship' the 1898 Hale water tower with a 1933 Mack tractor. To the left is Jim Melia's new 85' American-LaFrance aerial that he just bought. He even helped replace our flag pole rope.



The Battle for Baltimore: 1814.

Our exhibit on what fire engines looked like in 1814 and how few able-bodied men were left to man the engines, continue to arouse our curiosity. This major exhibit will stay up in a modified form into 2015. The 1763 Mechanical volunteers took a leading role in the War and we are grateful to those members today who supported this exhibit.



LIGHTING: A NEW LOOK in the MAIN HALL

As you know we have been working on the replacement of the 1971 fluorescent lamp fixtures for over six years. \$31,000 in special gifts has permitted the FMM to remove all of the fluorescent fixtures, install 24 LED boxes, and a portion of the track spot lights. Miles Electric Co. did a splendid job of working around the historic vehicles! David Steinitz provided the basic concept of what we needed to display the exhibits correctly with balanced light. The volunteers moved thousands of feet of plastic to protect the artifacts, staying ahead of the electricians. The next goal is to raise about \$45,000 to finish installing the track lighting system. Donors, don't be shy!

WE HONOR THESE DONORS:

Whiting-Turner Construction Co.

The Knott Foundation

James Alden Marsh

and also Miles Electric Co.

and BG&E SmartEnergy





The 1916 Mack AC is being prepared for its 100th birthday. Larry Spangler is adding the stripes; Ken Soderbeck did the transfers; and Brian coaxed the water pump apart allowing an old-stock impeller to be installed. Thanks go to Jack Comer and Gary Mahan for their magic. Scott Ruhl made the water pump repairs possible.

The Mack Preservationist Award this year was given posthumously to our founder, Stephen G. Heaver, and five others. Steve devoted his life to preserving and the sharing of history.



PHOTO CREDITS

Please give a round of applause to the photographers who contributed to this issue of Watchdesk:

Lee Smith, Tom Heaver,

Jim Melia, Ted Elder and

Francine Michaelson.

JOIN US!

A member of the Fire Museum receives:

- Unlimited admission for one full year (including annual members-only pizza party and Christmas train garden)
- 10% discount on all museum shop purchases
- \$10 discount on all birthday parties and rentals

FAMILY: \$55 (includes 2 parents or 2 grandparents and children/grandchildren under age 18)

JUNIOR: \$15

SENIOR/FIREFIGHTER: \$30

ENGINEER: \$75

LIEUTENANT: \$125

CAPTAIN: \$200

DISTRICT CHIEF: \$300

Your membership dues will help strengthen our educational programs and activities.

JOIN TODAY! You'll be glad you did!



We turned out our 1888 Clapp & Jones steamer, originally assigned to E14, and our 1922 Ahrens-Fox, E7, to the re-dedication of Engine Co. house, now the City's oldest operating fire station (1888). This house was dramatically renovated when the matching towers were taken down and the second floor windows changed.



A major project got a boost this year when Brian picked up the rebuilding project for the 25 kilowatt generator (120volt). The 227 cubic inch Continental engine is, as of October 2014, nearing the end of its reconstruction and we expect to start re-wiring it in January.

The long-range goal is to rent this post World War II, 1947 Mack Flood Light wagon, for evening parties.. It will also be available for emergencies. The road engine and brakes were overhauled in 2005-8. Seen here is the tedious removal of the engine by Brian Fiedler. The lower left photo shows the wagon and assorted parts being sand blasted in October. Money is needed to support this project. Contact Steve if you can help.

New this year was Family Fire Safety Day cosponsored by the Citizens of Balto. County, Fireline, New York Life and others. Free Admission was in effect and 164 people took their time to share the day with us.





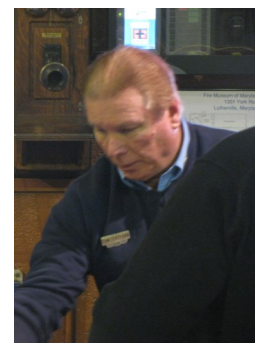
Our biggest event of the year is 'Cruisin' for Our Heroes' sponsored by the County Sheriff's Dept. It was on the 20th of September due to the 200th commemoration taking place at Fort McHenry. The yard was filled with antique cars, flea market, motor fire engines and custom fire models inside. Don't miss this one in 2015!



There are so many more photos to share...this image of Francine and Lee will remind us of all the rides and birthday parties that we did. Plan for 2015!

Congratulations to Steve Heaver who was presented with the highest award of the Small Museums Assn. at their annual conference in February. Then in New Jersey, he received the President's Award from SPAAMFAA pres. David Napier for a lifetime of service to the historical community.

Francine took us to the Kennilworth Bazaar for 3 summer movies. E35 (the 1935 Stutz) was a big hit. Tom Colleran (to the right) is one of our Duty Officers and a tour guide.





A Baltimore fire house first had a garden in 1917, the inspiration of a fire fighter. Can you find the Thomas Viaduct and the Bromo Seltzer Tower? There is a 3 alarm fire raging to the left side. A team of volunteers worked on our garden but the basic creation was completed the year before by Connie and Chuck Atkinson. Check the Web site for dates in 2014.



Lantern Night at the end of October is always beautiful inside the Museum. Please us join us. Fort Howard saw us making more leather hose. Gary Hartner has now learned how to mash rivets like the best of us. Everywhere we go, we make friends.



Santa's elves: Melissa tracking orders and printing images; David taking photos; Izzy getting lunch orders. In the photo below can be seen our 19th century Santa, Walt Mathers, examining the Garden. The *free photos* are always a hit on the Saturday after Thanksgiving when the Christmas Garden opens..



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

In 2012 almost \$500,000 was pledged for our New Endowment Strategy of raising 3M. During the past two years gifts have continued to come in and we urge you to think deeply about the heritage that your pledge would support. Please include the Fire Museum of Maryland in your estate planning. If you wish to give property now but retain residency, that is just another one of many ways of helping. Call Steve Heaver at 410-321-7500 ext.101 if you would like to discuss various options.

Become a member of the Charles T. Holloway Legacy Society

Speaking of the future, last year we wrote of hiring a full-time assistant curator to understudy the work that Steve does including the operation of our historic fleet. We are thrilled to announce that **Alex C. Guerrieri** has joined the staff. He comes with machinery and architectural interests and a love for Seagrave, a BA in History from the Univ. of Puget Sound and a MS in Architecture (Heritage Conservation & Preservation) from the Univ. of Minnesota.

The estate of **James Alden Marsh** has pledged to cover Alex's salary for 2015. Would you consider doing this, full or in part, for 2016? About \$36,000. Contact Steve or a member of the Board.

BOARD

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Brian Fiedler, Mechanic

William McCartin
Collections Technician

Francine Michaelson
Birthday, Rentals & Members

John LaCosta
Superintendent of Fire Alarm

Vivian Emala
Web Site Design

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Fire Museum of Maryland is to collect, preserve, display, and interpret historically significant apparatus and related artifacts, memorabilia, and records of the fire service in the United States; and to educate the public about the history, people, equipment and techniques of the fire service and about fire prevention and safety.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

We have the very best birthday parties here at the Fire Museum with:

- A party room (with 4 tables covered with red vinyl) exclusively for your party
- A play room (Discovery Room) – put on fire gear and climb on a real fire engine
- Fire engine rides in the parking lot*
- Visiting fireman in full gear gives safety talk*

**Added Fee*

While mom is setting up the party, the kids can play in the Discovery Room putting on fire gear, climbing on a real fire engine and playing with dozens of toys.

We carry birthday party supplies and special birthday gifts in our Gift Shop. Call us early at 410-321-7500 x103 to schedule a party – or check our website at www.firemuseummd.org.



Lindsey Mack, graduate of M.I.C.A., is painting a mural on the birthday room 10 ft. overhead door.



**FIRE MUSEUM
OF MARYLAND**
1301 York Road
Lutherville MD 21093
410-321-7500
www.firemuseummd.org